FROM THE BOOKSHELF NO. 128 FEBRUARY 17, 1976
JOHN ALBERT

THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO TWO
BY ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN

ANNCR: THE VOICE OF AMERICA BRINGS YOU ANOTHER IN THE WEEKLY SERIES. . . FROM THE BOOKSHELF, A SERIES IN WHICH WE REPORT ON BOOKS AMERICANS ARE CURRENTLY READING. TODAY, THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO TWO BY ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN, PUBLISHED BY HARPER AND ROW. HERE IS BOOK EDITOR ----------WITH JOHN ALBERT'S REPORT:

EDITOR: THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO TWO IS THE SECOND VOLUME OF SOLZHENITSYN'S MASSIVE WORK ON THE SOVIET SLAVE LABOR SYSTEM UNDER GULAG -- THE CENTRAL LABOR CAMP ADMINISTRATION. GULAG ONE DESCRIBED THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, STARTING WITH THE ARRESTS, INTERROGATION AND TRANSPORTATION OF PRISONERS TO THE CAMPS SOLZHENITSYN CALLED A STATE-WITHIN-A-STATE STRETCHING FROM LENINGRAD TO KOMSOMOLSK. THAT SYSTEM, HE SAID, COULD PROCESS UP TO FIFTEEN MILLION INMATES AT A TIME.

THE SECOND VOLUME IS, AS ITS SUBTITLE, "AN EXPERIMENT IN LITERARY INVESTIGATION," SUGGESTS, AN ATTEMPT TO PRESENT IN LITERARY LANGUAGE THE INSTITUTION OF MASS SLAVE LABOR IN THE SOVIET UNION. IT CONTAINS, IN ADDITION TO THE WRITER'S OWN EXPERIENCE OF EIGHT YEARS IN THESE CAMPS, THE TESTIMONY OF MORE THAN TWO-HUNDRED OTHER INMATES, NAMED AND UNNAMED PEOPLE SOLZHENITSYN INTERVIEWED. WHAT WAS PARTIALLY KNOWN IN THE WEST THROUGH THE INDIVIDUAL MEMOIRS

EDITOR: OF VICTIMS OF THE SYSTEM, IS FOR THE FIRST TIME BROUGHT
(CONT'D) TOGETHER BY A GREAT RUSSIAN WRITER IN ONE MONUMENTAL WORK.

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IT IS DIFFICULT TO JUDGE WHICH OF THE TWO VOLUMES IS A GREATER SHOCK TO THE READER IN TERMS OF DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF HUMAN SUFFERING, BRUTALITY AND HEROISM.

THERE IS, HOWEVER, A GREAT DISTINCTION BETWEEN GULAG ONE AND GULAG TWO. THE FIRST VOLUME ACQUAINTS US WITH THE SYSTEM. THE SECOND ONE GIVES US AN INSIGHT INTO THE DAILY LIVES AND DEATHS OF THE INMATES, HALF OF WHOM WERE POLITICAL PRISONERS, PERSECUTED NOT ONLY BY THE GUARDS, BUT ALSO -- AS PART OF THE SYSTEM -- BY THE PRIVILEGED COMMON CRIMINALS. SOLZHENITSYN IS FIRST CONCERNED WITH ACQUAINTING HIS OWN PEOPLE AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD WITH THE "CANCER" THAT EXISTED AND STILL EXISTS IN THEIR MIDST. HE THEN GOES ON TO DEAL WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE CAMP SYSTEM NOT ONLY TO THE SOUL AND HUMAN DIGNITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL VICTIM BUT ALSO TO THOSE WHO ACT AS TOOLS OF THE STATE..

SOVIET SOCIETY, HE WRITES, THROUGH THIS GULAG SYSTEM, BECAME INFECTED WITH AN ATMOSPHERE OF CONSTANT FEAR, SERVITUDE, SECRECY AND DISTRUST. THIS WAS EXACERBATED BY THE REGIME'S SUCCESS IN KEEPING THE PEOPLE IN ALMOST COMPLETE IGNORANCE OF WHAT WAS GOING ON. BETRAYAL, CORRUPTION, CRUELTY AND THE LIE BECAME PATTERNS OF EXISTENCE.

EDITOR: (CONT'D) AS MASSIVE AS SOLZHENITSYN'S WORK IS, ITS MOST MOVING MESSAGE CAN BE FOUND IN PART FOUR OF THE SECOND VOLUME, WHICH COMPRISES A BARE FIFTY-FIVE PAGES. THE CHAPTER IS ENTITLED "THE SOUL AND BARBED WIRE." THE AUTHOR DESCRIBES WHAT CAMP LIFE DOES TO HUMAN DIGNITY WHEN THE ONE CONSUMING THOUGHT IS TO SURVIVE "AT ANY PRICE." IN HIS DESCRIPTION OF WHAT GULAG CAN DO TO THE HUMAN CHARACTER, SOLZHENITSYN DOES NOT SPARE HIMSELF. "ONLY THOSE CAN UNDERSTAND US," "WHO ATE FROM THE SAME BOWL WITH US," HE RECALLS A FORMER GIRL INMATE SAYING.

THE AUTHOR TELLS US WITH UTTER FRANKNESS THAT HE, TOO, ALLOWED HIMSELF TO BE RECRUITED AS AN INFORMER IN ORDER TO AVOID KILLING WORK. HE SAYS THAT ALTHOUGH HE NEVER ACTUALLY BETRAYED ANYBODY, HE DOES FEEL THAT HE SOLD HIS SOUL TO SAVE HIS BODY.

IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND BETTER WHAT THE AUTHOR MEANS, WE MUST QUOTE HIS OWN DESCRIPTION OF THE CHOICES A CAMP INMATE FACED:

VOICE: "WHO EVER WANTS TO SURVIVE IS UP AGAINST THE GREAT FORK OF CAMP LIFE. FROM THIS POINT THE ROADS GO TO THE RIGHT AND TO THE LEFT. ONE OF THEM WILL RISE AND THE OTHER WILL DESCEND. IF YOU GO TO THE RIGHT--YOU LOSE YOUR LIFE, AND IF YOU GO TO THE LEFT--YOU LOSE YOUR CONSCIENCE."

EDITOR: TO SURVIVE AT ANY PRICE, HE SAYS, MEANS: AT THE PRICE OF SOMEONE ELSE. AND THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THE PRISONERS DID NOT TURN TO THE RIGHT. THE ALTERNATIVE WAS TO BECOME AN INFORMER, TO BETRAY ONE'S OWN COMRADES.

EDITOR: (CONT'D) BUT AT THE SAME TIME, SOLZHENITSYN CITES NUMEROUS EXAMPLES OF HUMAN HEROISM AND MOVING ACTS OF FRIENDSHIP. "IT IS PARTICULARLY IN SLAVERY," HE EXCLAIMS, "THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME WE HAVE LEARNED TO RECOGNIZE GENUINE FRIENDSHIP." SOLZHENITSYN SETS FOR HIMSELF AND HIS PEOPLE VERY HIGH STANDARDS WHICH HE FEELS HAVE NOT BEEN MET. HE REMARKS REPEATEDLY THAT THE MASSIVE POLICE TERROR AND THE CAMP SYSTEM WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE IF THE MAJORITY OF SOVIET CITIZENS HAD NOT BEHAVED LIKE "RABBITS," ASKING NO QUESTIONS, SHYING AWAY FROM HELPING THE FAMILIES OF VICTIMS AND EVEN DENOUNCING INNOCENT CHILDREN.. THE AUTHOR DOES NOT CONDEMN THOSE WHO WERE NOT WILLING TO RISK DEATH TO HELP OTHERS, BUT HE DOES BLAME MASS "COWARDICE" FOR THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF POLICE TERROR. REPEATEDLY USING THE ANALOGY OF THE CANCER FROM WHICH HE HIMSELF HAS SUFFERED, THE AUTHOR SEES THE WHOLE SOVIET UNION AS IN SOME WAY INFECTED BY THE POISONS OF THE ARCHIPELAGO. AND HE WONDERS FINALLY WHETHER IT WILL EVER BE ABLE TO GET RID OF THEM.

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LOOKING AT THE SLAVE LABOR CAMP SYSTEM FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF STALIN, WHO PERFECTED IT, SOLZHENITSYN ASKS HIMSELF WHETHER IT REALLY ACCOMPLISHED ANYTHING. AFTER ALL, SLAVE LABOR MINED COAL, COPPER AND GOLD, AND BUILT RAILROADS, CANALS, HYDROELECTRIC STATIONS AND NINE ENTIRELY NEW CITIES. NEVERTHELESS, SLAVE LABOR, THE AUTHOR ARGUES, WAS GROSSLY INEFFICIENT, AND THE CAMPS NEVER PAID FOR THEMSELVES, DESPITE THE HORRIBLE LIVING CONDITIONS AND THE MINIMAL OUTLAYS TO FEED THE INMATES. EVEN THE GREATEST TERROR COULD NOT

EDITOR: PREVENT PRISONERS FROM SHIRKING WORK, MISUSING AND RUINING
(CONT'D)
TOOLS, AND STEALING EVERY PIECE OF MATERIAL USEFUL TO THEM. MASSIVE CORRUPTION AMONG CAMP PERSONNEL DID THE REST. AS DIFFICULT AS IT WAS TO TRANSLATE THIS WORK SO FULL OF THE IDIOMS OF THE CAMP INMATES, SOLZHENITSYN'S POWERFUL STYLE, HIS BITTER PASSION, HIS BITING IRONY, HIS FERVENT PLEA FOR THE OUTSIDE WORLD TO UNDERSTAND HIS PURPOSE, ALL COME THROUGH WITH TREMENDOUS POWER. IT IS IMMATERIAL WHETHER ALL OF SOLZHENITSYN'S LOFTY PRINCIPLES FOR RESISTING TYRANNY ARE REALISTIC OR NOT. AS A FIRM BELIEVER TRYING TO CONVEY TO THE READER WHAT FILLS HIS SOUL, HE SUCCEEDS IN PUTTING DOWN ON PAPER A LONG SERIES OF MOVING INDIVIDUAL TRAGEDIES AND INDIVIDUAL TRIUMPHS OVER SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE ODDS.

OPT

ANNCR: YOU HAVE BEEN LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF AMERICA WEEKLY PROGRAM, FROM THE BOOKSHELF, IN WHICH WE REPORT ON BOOKS AMERICANS ARE READING. TODAY'S SELECTION WAS THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO TWO BY ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN. JOIN US AGAIN NEXT ----------(AT THIS TIME) FOR ANOTHER SELECTION FROM THE BOOKSHELF. THIS IS ----------.

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WJL/RTD